

derstand. I answered and she didn't know what I said. Just the same we understood each other. Weren't we both of us women? Weren't we both of us carrying home heavy bundles and we were both going to sew all night and with us our children so that we could eat. Where would I have been but for her? She called to her friends. They gathered about me. They took her bundle between them. She lifted me to my feet. My bundle she put on her head. In this way I got home.

"Then you were born, Morris. Each baby — what a worry. You remember, Reba — come close to me — you were my only help, you helped wash and dress the new babies. You were the only one there to hand me a cup of water.

"How hard papa worked in those days. Winter's mornings he would crawl out before the light, bent down like an old man he would stir around making himself tea. Coughing, always coughing—I could hear him come up the stairs nights. His cough came ahead of him and when he left I could hear it going off in the distance. He would wipe his mouth with a rag and I would see him looking at it. I knew what he was looking for. How many went that way! What with the long hours and little food. And then he would look at me and the children. We would sit there and the spectre of death would stand between us. Fear went to bed with us, and fear got up with us.

"Was it a wonder that babies got sick? Was it any wonder they died? Oh, it is a bitter thing to go through the pain of bearing and then the pain of losing. But there is a bitterer thing yet and that is when they die that you should be glad for their sake."

Pain stopped his mother's speech. There was silence. Throughout the room a little sound only broke it — Reba crying softly to herself. She seemed remote and lonely in her fashionable plain clothes.

Memories flowed past Morris as she talked. He remembered a dank tenement house. When you opened the door foul air rushed out past you like an evil animal. He remembered the tide of pants mounting so high that when you went into the room you thought of pants first and human beings last. Pants every where and his mother's fingers flying as though driven by fear while he sat and played beside her with spools on a string. Snatches of talk went on over his head of underpay, of the cost of thread. The older children were at work beside her and if he cried, Reba hushed him. His

mother never seemed to hear. Often he crawled into the hallway and out into the odorous street.

She spoke again: "I would sew and sew. The children would sicken before my eyes. Their cries would beat upon my heart. I could not stop to tend to them. My hands could not stop work. The others must eat. Once when father was out of work, the baby lay dying. I knew it, I had seen his blue lips. There were eight more pants to finish—'When these are done, I'll take him up.' I thought, I finished the work and I looked around. He lay still. I went to him. Dead, dead. I had not stopped work even for death."

Again she spoke.

"You remember, Reba—how you would pick bastings and pick bastings—sitting on your little stool. You would nod asleep. How many times have I waked you up, jogging you with my foot. How many times have I thought — 'Must I bring children into the world to live in a dark hole, to work almost before they can walk, only that they may have a crust of bread to eat?' That was the time when clothes were made of the blood and bones of men and women and children. Torment went into the making of clothes.

"Oh, the long years, one after the other like that—Oh, the long years!

"I remember when your papa just joined a union. 'You will lose your job', I said. I was frightened. I didn't understand."

He would explain. "There is a city full who suffer like us. Not a few. Hundred and hundreds—hundred and hundreds—the shop full of girls and women speeding their lives away. Thousands and thousands and thousands living like us. Who will help us if we don't. No Moses will come to lead us from this bondage."

"Strikes one after another and the men scabbing on each other because of misery and hunger. 'You're a fool,' Mose Stich said to papa — 'How can you organize an industry like ours? There's too much labor; the people are too wretched. You'll be out of work all the time.'

"When the boys and papa began bringing home good money and the hours grew shorter, what a pleasure! I could look with joy on Moe and Henry! These boys can go to school, they can learn something.

"Sometimes when I would hear the children talking that women were making twenty and thirty a week, 'I am dreaming,' I would think. But the union grew and grew. Do you know how?